

Message Text

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PAGE 01 LAGOS 01153 280703Z
ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
-----073679 280709Z /11
O 271623Z JAN 78
FM AMEMBASSY LAGOS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6174

C O N F I D E N T I A L LAGOS 1153

EXDIS

STATE PASS WHITE HOUSE

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: OVIP (CARTER, JIMMY)
SUBJECT: PRESIDENTIAL TRIP TO NIGERIA

AS THE AFRICAN BUREAU IS AWARE, I AM DEEPLY WORRIED ABOUT IMPLICATIONS FOR NIGERIA-AMERICAN BILATERAL RELATIONSHIP OF A) POSSIBLE POSTPONEMENT OF PRESIDENT'S PROPOSED EASTER-TIME VISIT TO NIGERIA, AND B) CONTINUING DELAY IN RESPONDING TO OBASANJO'S REQUEST OF TWO MONTHS AGO THAT WE EXAMINE THE ALTERNATIVE OF 'ANYTIME AFTER APRIL 3' IN VIEW OF NIGERIAN BUDGET PRESSURES DURING ORIGINALLY SUGGESTED TIME PERIOD (MARCH 22 TO APRIL 3).

2. SIGNIFICANT POSTPONEMENT (E.G. BEYOND APRIL) WILL PRODUCE SUBSTANTIAL CRITICAL REACTION HERE, BOTH PUBLIC AND OFFICIAL. THIS REACTION WILL RISK JEOPARDY TO CONTINUING FORWARD MOVEMENT IN OUR IMPROVED POLITICAL RELATIONSHIP, AND WILL SPECIFICALLY THREATEN THE ACHIEVEMENT OF A NUMBER OF KEY ECONOMIC/FINANCIAL OBJECTIVES THAT WE NOW SEE COMING INTO RANGE. FURTHERMORE, CONTINUING DELAY IN OUR RESPONSE IS PROVING INCREASINGLY EMBARRASSING IN OUR RELATIONS WITH TOP LEVELS OF THE FMG. OBASANJO CANNOT ORGANIZE HIS PERSONAL SCHEDULE UNTIL WE

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GET HIM OFF THE HOOK. FOR EXAMPLE, UNDERSTAND ON GOOD AUTHORITY THAT A VISIT TO MOSCOW THIS SPRING IS UNDER ACTIVE CONSIDERATION. WE HAVE REPORTS OF A PROPOSED INVITATIONS TO WEST GERMAN CHANCELLOR SCHMIDT AND FOREIGN MINISTER GENSCER TO VISIT NIGERIA. KHARTOUM'S 0289 REPORTED THAT OBASANJO WOULD VISIT SUDAN NEXT MARCH. WHATEVER THE SUBSTANCE

OF OUR RESPONSE TO THE FMG, WE OWE THEM A RESPONSE IN VERY SHORT ORDER.

3. (OUR CONCERNS REGARDING DAMAGE THAT SIGNIFICANT POSTPONE-
MENT OF THE PRESIDENT'S VISIT WOULD INFLICT ON OUR BILATERAL
RELATIONSHIP HAVE NOT RPT NOT DIMINISHED. IF WE ARE REALLY UP
AGAINST IT, HOWEVER, AND WHITE HOUSE CANNOT ARRANGE NIGERIA
VISIT FOR EARLY APRIL (BUT AFTER APRIL 3), WE OWE YOU OUR
BEST ADVICE ON HOW WE MIGHT AT LEAST TO SOME EXTENT MINIMIZE THE
UNFAVORABLE REACTION. FIRST, WE SHOULD IF POSSIBLE PRESENT THE
FMG WITH A CHOICE OF NEW DATES RATHER THAN A SINGLE TAKE-IT-OR-
LEAVE-IT OPTION. FOR EXAMPLE, WE MIGHT OFFER A CHOICE BETWEEN
EARLY MAY AND MID TO LATE JULY, OR A CHOICE BETWEEN LATE MAY
AND LATE JUNE. A LESS ATTRACTIVE OPTION, BUT BETTER THAN
PROPOSING ONLY ONE POSSIBLE TIME PERIOD, WOULD BE TO OFFER A
NEW TIMING BUT INDICATE THAT THE ORIGINAL EASTER-TIME OPTION
IS STILL OPEN IN THE EVENT NIGERIAN BUDGET PREPARATION PRESSURES
HAVE EASED. IF ONLY ONE TIME PERIOD IS PROPOSED, THE MAGNITUDE
HOW FAR INTO THE FUTURE ARE THE NEW PROPOSED DATES
ANYTIME AFTER LATE SUMMER WILL LOOK LIKE A PUT-DOWN AS WELL
AS A PUT-OFF TO THE FMG. SUCH AN OFFER WOULD PROBABLY BE
MET BY LONG DELAY IN FMG RESPONSE AND MIGHT RESULT IN AN EVENTUAL
FALL-THROUGH OF THE PROPOSED ALTOGETHER.

4. WE SHOULD NOTE THAT MID-APRIL THROUGH JULY ARE THE HEAVY
RAINFALL MONTHS IN LAGOS. THUS, IN EVENT EARLY APRIL IS NOT
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POSSIBLE, A VISIT DURING 3 1/2 MONTHS THEREAFTER WOULD REQUIRE
PLANNING FOR ALTERNATE SHELTERED SITES FOR EACH OUTDOORS EVENT
IN CASE OF RAIN. RAIN WOULD OF COURSE CUT DOWN ON VISUAL IMPACT
OF SUCH EVENTS.

5. WE HAVE LEFT THE FMG HANGING FOR TWO MONTHS WITHOUT A
RESPONSE. THIS IS NO WAY TO DEAL WITH FRIENDS, ESPECIALLY
WHEN THEY ARE PROUD, TOUCHY AND PRONE TO OVERREACTION.
EASUM

NOTE BY OC/T: NOT PASSED WHITE HOUSE.

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: n/a
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 27 jan 1978
Decaption Date: 20 Mar 2014
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978LAGOS01153
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780042-0404
Format: TEL
From: LAGOS
Handling Restrictions:
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780115/aaaaamdj.tel
Line Count: 105
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 37b170df-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION SS
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 26 apr 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3702421
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: PRESIDENTIAL TRIP TO NIGERIA AS THE AFRICAN BUREAU IS AWARE, I AM DEEPLY WORRIED ABOUT IMPLICATIONS FOR NIGERIA-AMERICAN BILATERAL
TAGS: OVIP, (CARTER, JIMMY)
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/37b170df-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014